

# The Sniper's Parents Talk

## Emporia, Kan.

The parents of the slain young man identified as the New Orleans rooftop sniper said last night they blame the Navy and society for the death of their son and the shootings in which six other persons were killed.

"It all started in the Navy," Mrs. Mark Essex said. She said her son came home to Emporia last Octo-

ber to "think about the injustices the black man receives in the service."

She said her son was "harassed" with petty annoyances and "racist mistreatment. It was just these little things on top of one another that made Jimmy do what he did."

## TERROR

Mark James Robert Essex, 24, was killed Sunday



AP Wirephoto

**ROBERT BEMISH**  
He fears new attack

bolt on it and took very careful aim."

"And I was saying it couldn't be for real—it was bad enough getting out of the fire, but you just aren't prepared to walk into the business end of a rifle."

## POOL

The shot knocked Bemish into the heated pool, where his airfilled coat acted as a life preserver.

"When I hit the water," he

said, "I was thinking it must have been a small bore because it didn't hurt as much as I thought it would."

Bemish floated in the water for more than three hours, playing possum and keeping as close an eye on the sniper as he could. When the gunman appeared to be busy elsewhere, firemen broke in to rescue the broadcast executive.

## CONDITION

He was reported to be in fair condition Tuesday with a wound caused by a bullet which passed through his abdomen but missed his intestines.

Police had said Sunday that the sniper who was killed on the 18th floor roof was dressed in a black "liberation army" shirt and green Army fatigue pants.

"The man who shot me had on a light tan jacket and brown slacks," Bemish said.

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night by policemen in a helicopter that swooped over the roof of the 18-story hotel after a day of terror in which six persons, including three policemen, were killed and 17 persons were wounded by gunfire.

"He was mistreated in the Navy," Mrs. Essex said. "It was prejudice. I don't know if the Navy is doing it deliberately, but they are doing it. I have talked to other young men, white men, and they confirm what Jimmy told me. Young blacks are not going to accept the white racist society."

"If he had not been mistreated in the Navy, he wouldn't have been guillible or easily influenced by outside influences," his father said, "and he'd be here now."

#### 'SIGNAL'

Mrs. Essex said the New Orleans shootings are "a clear signal for white America to get off the seat of its pants and do something."

"I don't want my son to have died in vain. If this terrible thing will awaken white America to the injustices that blacks suffer, then some good will have come of it."

Essex added, "We must cease provoking people to the point that they must seek revenge to get even with society. I blame society."

"My Jimmy did not hate the white man," Mrs. Essex said.

"He hated what the white

man stood for, the white system. He knew whites, he went to school with whites, he dated a white girl and then he told me that he didn't know why blacks dated white girls because they're no different than black girls and they're not as beautiful. That's what he told me.

"Jimmy wasn't doing this to be a martyr. He didn't want to be a hero. He just wanted to change things."

#### SISTER

Earlier yesterday, young Essex' sister told a CBS interviewer, "I think it was this white racist society that drove Jimmy to do what he did."

"When Jimmy went into the Navy he really saw what life, the world, was all

about," said Penny Fox of Waterloo, Iowa. "He saw that white people control the world, and blacks were being oppressed by the white man. He didn't like society the way it is. He wanted to change things. The Navy to Jimmy was his own private hell."

Mrs. Essex told CBS she had talked with her son in New Orleans by telephone on Christmas Day. "He was the same old Jimmy. He was getting along well in school and enjoyed the South. He said he thought he had found himself in the South and planned to stay there."

"Jimmy wanted to be a man. This was his philosophy — he wanted to be a man."

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MRS. MARK ESSEX  
'It all started in the Navy'